International Seabed Authority ISBA/19/A/14

Assembly

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Nineteenth session
Kingston, Jamaica
15-26 July 2013

Statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority at its nineteenth session

1. The nineteenth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston, from 15 to 26 July 2013. The Assembly held its 139th to 142nd meetings.

I. Adoption of the agenda

2. At its 139th meeting, on 15 July 2013, the Assembly adopted its agenda for the nineteenth session (ISBA/19/A/1).

II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly

3. At the same meeting, Vladimir Mikhailovich Polenov (Russian Federation) was elected President of the Assembly for the nineteenth session. Following consultations in the regional groups, the representatives of Singapore (Asia-Pacific States), South Africa (African States), Spain (Western European and Other States) and Brazil (Latin American and Caribbean States), were elected Vice-Presidents.

III. Election to fill vacancies on the Finance Committee

4. Also at the same meeting, the Assembly elected Mr. Olivier Guyonvarch (France) as a member of the Finance Committee to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Serge Ségura (France) to serve the remainder of the term ending 31 December 2016. It also elected Mr. Chen Changxue (China) to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Yao Jinsong (China) to serve the remainder of the term ending 31 December 2016, and Mr. Vishnu Dutt Sharma (India) to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Pradip Choudhary (India) to serve the remainder of the term ending 31 December 2016.

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IV. Annual report of the Secretary-General

5. The Assembly considered the annual report of the Secretary-General (ISBA/19/A/2) at its 140th and 141st meetings on 24 July and at its 142nd meeting on 25 July. At the 140th meeting, the Secretary-General introduced the report to the Assembly, as required under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Secretary-General reviewed the Authority's work since the eighteenth session and outlined the progress that had been made in the implementation of its programme of work for the period 2012-2014.

6. The Secretary-General's report provided an overview of the Authority's work, including relations with the host Government, administrative matters, and budgetary and financial issues. It also dealt with, inter alia, the status of contracts for exploration, the ongoing exploration and future exploitation of marine minerals in the Area, and capacity-development and training.

7. At the 141st meeting of the Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Arnold J. Nicholson, stated that, as the seat of the Authority, Jamaica was extremely pleased to witness the developments relating to the deep seabed. After elaborating on the stance of Jamaica relating to marine environmental protection, training and the mining code, he highlighted that the 2014 session, which would mark the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the establishment of the Authority, would provide an opportunity for the host country and the secretariat to continue the process of sensitization and awareness of the work of the Authority. He reaffirmed that Jamaica took its responsibility as host country seriously and would, as always, work in close collaboration with the Authority to ensure full implementation of the host country agreement, and stood ready to facilitate and assist in any endeavour to achieve that end through a continued process of dialogue. Subsequently, the Jamaican delegation made a statement on the issue of the employment of spouses of the Authority's staff in the host country.

8. Statements were also made by the delegations of Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, the Cook Islands, Cuba, Ecuador, Fiji, France, Germany, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition, statements were made by the observer delegations of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat, the Commonwealth and the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific. Members expressed their general satisfaction with the detailed report and indicated their support for the work that had been undertaken during the reporting period by the Authority. Ecuador, Swaziland and Timor-Leste were welcomed as new members of the Authority.

9. Several delegations reaffirmed the importance of the Voluntary Trust Fund and the International Seabed Authority Endowment Fund. The delegation of China stated that in July 2013 China made a contribution in the amount of $20,000 to the Voluntary Trust Fund, following its successive contributions of $20,000 in 2008, 2009 and 2012. The delegation of Japan informed the Assembly that Japan had decided to contribute $44,760 to the Voluntary Trust Fund. The delegation of Norway also announced that country's recent decision to contribute approximately

$100,000 to the Voluntary Trust Fund. The delegation of the United Kingdom indicated that the United Kingdom had contributed $10,000 to the Endowment Fund in 2013.

10. Speaking on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the representative of Australia recognized the significance of the proposal for a joint venture operation with the Enterprise, and wished to receive detailed advice from the secretariat, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee on the issues relating to the operation of the Enterprise to address a number of relatively new issues and challenges for the Authority. The same sentiment was echoed by several other delegations.

11. A number of delegations commended the substantial amount of preparatory work already carried out by the Authority, and anticipated further consideration of the exploitation code for polymetallic nodules at the Authority's next session in 2014, in particular, on the issues of the licensing system, fiscal regime and protection of the marine environment.

12. Many delegations congratulated the Governments of China and Japan, respectively, for the approval by the Council of the plan of work for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts that each country had submitted. Several delegations stated that the Legal and Technical Commission was expected more than ever to work in an efficient manner with the full participation of its members and to complete its consideration of the four pending applications for plans of work for exploration at its next session.

13. The delegations of Brazil, Cameroon, India, Indonesia and Mexico welcomed the workshop convened in Beijing in November 2012 focusing on the implementation of article 82 of the Convention. The delegations of Trinidad and Tobago as well as those of Australia, Canada and New Zealand highlighted the key role of the Authority in this respect. The delegations of Japan and Norway felt that there were more pressing issues before the Authority at the present time.

14. Many delegations stressed the significance of training and capacity-building for the developing countries to benefit from ocean resources. One delegation further called for a comprehensive assessment to be conducted on the capacity-building needs of member States in relation to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. The delegation of Nigeria expressed the hope that the African Group would be equitably rewarded in the allocation of training opportunities without compromising the qualification criteria.

15. A number of delegations attached importance to the protection of the marine environment. Several of them welcomed the recommendations issued by the Legal and Technical Commission for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area. Two delegations suggested that the environment management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone should be applicable mutatis mutandis to other zones of the Area. Some delegations continued to emphasize that the management of activities undertaken in the Area required accurate environmental baseline data.

16. Several delegations echoed the Secretary-General's appeal for all coastal States to deposit such charts or relevant information describing the outer limits of their continental shelf. The representative of the Philippines stated that such charts and other relevant information would be submitted to the Authority in due course.

17. Some delegations lamented the low attendance at the sessions, especially from the developing countries. One delegation noted that this year would be the lowest one, with 34 per cent participation for the Assembly. The lack of a quorum raised concerns over the legitimacy of the decisions adopted by the Authority. Several delegations voiced their support to the Secretary-General's plan for the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the establishment of the Authority, and called for improved attendance for the special occasion.

18. Endorsing a suggestion made by the representative of Argentina, the representatives of Brazil and Chile requested that all documents that formed the basis of the work of the Finance Committee be made available to delegations via the website or in the conference room.

V. Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee

19. At its 142nd meeting, on 25 July 2013, the Assembly considered the report of the Finance Committee contained in document ISBA/19/A/7-ISBA/19/C/11, including proposed measures for the recovery of the costs relating to the administration of exploration contracts with the Authority. On the basis of the recommendation of the Council, the Assembly adopted the decision relating to financial and budgetary matters, as contained in document ISBA/19/A/8. The Assembly also adopted the decision concerning overhead charges for the administration and supervision of exploration contracts, as contained in document ISBA/19/A/12.

VI. Approval of the amendments to the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area

20. At its 142nd meeting, on 25 July 2013, the Assembly considered and approved the amendments to the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area, as provisionally adopted by the Council at its 190th meeting, on 22 July 2013, as contained in the annex to the decision of the Council (ISBA/19/C/17). The decision of the Assembly is contained in document ISBA/19/A/9.

VII. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee

21. At its 139th meeting, on 15 July 2013, the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee consisting of the following nine members: Australia, Guyana, Jamaica, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Russian Federation.

22. The Committee held one meeting, on 24 July 2013, and elected Mrs. Indera Persaud (Guyana) as its Chair for the nineteenth session. The Committee examined the credentials of the representatives participating in the current session of the Assembly. The Committee had before it a memorandum by the secretariat dated 24 July 2013 on the status of those credentials. The report of the Committee is contained in document ISBA/19/A/10.

23. At its 142nd meeting, on 25 July 2013, the Assembly considered and approved the report of the Committee. The decision of the Assembly relating to the credentials of representatives to the nineteenth session is contained in document ISBA/19/A/11.

VIII. Other matters

24. At its 142nd meeting, on 25 July 2013, the Assembly adopted a decision expressing its condolences on the passing away of Vijay Kodagali, a geologist and long-serving member of the secretariat (ISBA/19/A/13).

IX. Dates of the next session of the Assembly

25. The next session of the Assembly will be held from 7 to 25 July 2014. It will be the turn of the Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Assembly in 2014.